

THE

HISTORIAN



OF HANCOCK COUNTY

www.hancockcountyhistoricalsociety.com

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

September 2024

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, September 19, 2024, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. The guest speaker will be Royal AI, who will speak on public broadcasting. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 228-467-4090. **Please call by noon on Wednesday, September 18**, to make your reservation. Seating is limited to forty-eight (48) people, and we need to order the correct number of lunches. **Served at noon, lunch is \$15.00 for members and \$17.00 for nonmembers**, payable at the door. The catering order is submitted on Wednesday at noon prior to the luncheon on Thursday. If you need to cancel your reservation, please call by noon on Wednesday prior to the luncheon if at all possible so that the society does not incur unnecessary expenses. It is catered by Almost Home Catering with Chef Michelle Nichols. The lunch menu is bourbon pork chops, cheddar cheese grits casserole, broccoli salad, lemon goeey butter bars, and yeast rolls.

ANNUAL CEMETERY TOUR

The Annual Cemetery Tour will be held on Halloween night, Thursday, October 31, 2024. Needed are volunteers to prepare the cemetery for the tour, to portray citizens buried there, and to act as guides. To volunteer, please call 228-467-4090. All actors and guides must be members of the Historical Society.



Perhaps the most influential "Power Couple" in the Vieux Carré at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century was Louise and Edward Livingston.

THE LIVINGSTON FAMILY

By

James Keating M.D.

One of the oldest, wealthiest, most influential, and politically active families in our country are the Livingstons. The earliest member of this clan was an immigrant from Scotland that settled in 1675 in the Dutch Colony of New Netherland (aka New York). His name was Robert Livingston the Elder (1654-1728). Robert was a successful merchant and entrepreneur who believed that politics was a necessity for a family of such prominence. Robert the El-

der married a daughter of a Dutch merchant, Alida Schuyler (1656-1727). Their progeny represents about one million people today. Three of their descendants are the subject of this article: Robert R. Livingston (1746-1813), Edward Phillip Livingston (1764-1836), and Robert "Bob" Linlithgow Jr. Livingston (b. 1943).

Robert Robert (yes *Robert Robert*) Livingston was born and reared at the family estate in the Hudson River Valley called *Clermont Manor*. He graduated from Kings College (aka Columbia) and was admitted to the bar in 1773. In 1777 he became the First Chancellor of New York which was the highest judicial officer of the state. Chancellor Livingston was a member of the

THE

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

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**HANCOCK COUNTY
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Telephone [228] 467-4090**Email address:****hancockcountyhis@bellsouth.net****Website:****www.hancockcountyhistoricalsociety.com**
Marianne Pluim, Webmaster**LOBRANO HOUSE
HOURS**MONDAY — FRIDAY
10:00AM — 3:00PM**CLOSED 12—1 (lunch)****MISSION STATEMENT**

“TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION.”

Committee of Five that drafted the Declaration of Independence in 1776. He married Mary Stevens (1751-1814) and they bore two daughters.

In 1801 President Thomas Jefferson appointed Robert R. Livingston US Minister to France. Livingston negotiated the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. He and James Monroe were charged with the mission to purchase from Napoleon the City of New Orleans for \$10M. However, Napoleon wanted \$15M to finance a proposed invasion of England and offered the entire Mississippi River Valley which constituted the Louisiana Colony at that time. Livingston accepted these terms of sale. Shortly thereafter, Jefferson and the US Congress ratified the Louisiana Purchase. Liv-

ingston famously states: “We have lived long, but this is the noblest work of our whole lives...The United States takes rank this day among first powers of the world.” Robert Livingston died in 1813. His younger brother, Edward, would also become an important figure in our history,

The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 was an important turning point in the history of Hancock County and the port of New Orleans. An era of unbridled optimism about the potential opportunities for fortune and fame attracted many fortune seekers within the United States and the French and Spanish Islands in the Caribbean Sea such as Cuba and Santo Domingo.

One such optimist was a New York attorney, Edward Liv-

President's Corner**Sink or Be Sunk****An historical accounting of the Battle of St. Louis Bay in December of 1812**

Not satisfied with the terms of the Treaty of Paris since the September of 1783 formally ending the “American Revolution,” the British had the audacity to continue to harass US merchant ships and conscript our citizens into their service. These overt actions resulted in the United States declaring war on Great Britain on June 18, 1812.

While many are familiar with the Battle of New Orleans and the heroics of the gallant troops led by General Jackson and Jean Lafitte, a lesser known yet critical engagement with the enemy took place Saint Louis Bay and the adjacent Lake Borgne.

Sink or Be Sunk, produced by Beverley Frater and directed by Jim Codling, both of whom are members of the Hancock County Historical Society's Board of Directors, is a one act play that gives an historical accounting of the “Battle of Saint Louis Bay.” The play is being performed at the Bay Saint Louis Community Hall free of charge to both participating schools on Friday, September 27 at 10:00 AM and for the public on Saturday, September 28 at 2:00 PM and 7:00 PM.

While there is no admission fee, you do need to register on the Society's website to be assured of seating.

“It does not matter what boat you came over on, we are all in the same boat now.”

US Representative John Lew (1940-2020)

Chris Roth
President



Robert Livingston was on the Committee of Five that drafted the Declaration of Independence in 1776. As US Minister to France in 1803 Robert Livingston negotiated with Napoleon the Louisiana Purchase.

Livingston (1764-1836), who came to New Orleans in 1804 and subsequently built a large law practice. Edward was a brilliant lawyer who graduated from Princeton University and was admitted to the bar in New York State in 1785. He possessed remarkable skill in writing legal letters, legal documents, and law. Later in life he served in the US Congress with such distinguished people as Henry Clay and Daniel Webster. Both orators, who were frequent guests in the drawing room of his wife, Louise, complimented his writing as superior to their own written word. His life and accomplishments bear witness to this valuable gift for an attorney and a public official.

Another émigré to New Orleans at this same time was a French Creole refugee from Santo Domingo, Louise d'Avezac (1785-1860). Edward was a widower but was totally smitten by this nineteen-year-old woman of extraordinary beauty and uncommon intellect. Edward spoke fluent French; Louise spoke only French. They married

in 1805. Her father was a wealthy landowner, and Louise was described as "majestic in her person and elegant in her manners with a long purse." She greatly influenced her husband's public career.

The story of Edward and Louise is a story of New Orleans society in this time frame. After the Louisiana Purchase, English-speaking Americans poured into the city to make a fast buck. The original French Creoles in New Orleans did not speak English, and the Americans did not speak French. Edward and Louise were able to build bridges or bonds between these two groups for commercial, political, and social benefit for the entire community. Louise was well-educated probably by private tutors, and she quickly became fluent in English. Louise was an accomplished letter-writer and her letters to her sister-in-law written every week for many decades are well-preserved and have been a treasure trove of information about New Orleans and Washington DC society.

In 1814 General Andrew Jackson came to New Orleans to defend the city from attack by the British Army. Jackson cobbled together an army of approximately four thousand Kentucky soldiers, Choctaw Indians, Navy gunners, and local Creole militia. Yet, he needed flints, cannon, ammunition, and intelligence about the local landscape. Edward Livingston was quickly recruited by Jackson to be his aide-de-camp, militia secretary, and confidential advisor. Edward suggested to Jackson that the local pirate and prominent French Quarter merchant, Jean Lafitte, would make a valuable ally and be a source of men and materiel. Jackson instructed Edward to negotiate a deal and write up a pardon for Jean Lafitte. Coincidentally, Livingston happened to be representing Lafitte for litigation in federal court and received legal fees reputed to be \$10,000. Livingston represented the best political interests

of the French Creoles that were opposed by the American citizenry headed by Governor Claiborne. Edward was Chairman of the Committee for Public Defense made up with French Creoles, and Edward was able to recruit the important state militia. It was ironic that an American migrant, Edward, became the leader of the original French Creole people and was able to recruit this element of New Orleans society in 1814. His biographer, William Hatcher, reports: "He disregarded his prejudices against Claiborne and took the lead in the movement to unite all groups for the support of the nation. This action proved to be one of the most important steps in his career." The rest is history. The Battle of New Orleans ended the War of 1812.

In later life Edward served in the Louisiana Legislature and the US Congress. His old friend President Jackson asked him to be Secretary of State from 1831-1833.

After 1815, French Quarter society gathered in Louise and Edward's salon in their house on Royal Street where the "movers and shakers" would visit and discuss the important issues of the day much like the Parisians in France. Louise's salon became the center of New Orleans society from 1805-1825 as would her salon in Washington DC be from 1823-1836. Southern women exerted immense influence on political affairs in these times. She never lost her accent, but preferred English for purpose of earnest expression. She was Edward's most trusted counselor at every step in life. Edward was Andrew Jackson's most trusted counselor.

Edward was sent to Paris as a minister plenipotentiary for President Jackson. He was deemed an excellent choice for this post not only because of his own talents. In Europe, the character of the minister's wife is almost as important as his own. Jackson and the other Washington power brokers knew that Paris was the very place for



Bob Livingston married Bonnie Robichaux and they reared four children. Bob, Bonnie, and young Robert 'Shep' celebrate Christmas in this 1967 photo. They have been married fifty-nine years.

Louise. There she would dazzle and charm in the salons of Paris as valuable diplomat of good will for the young United States.

Edward gained a reputation as one of the greatest jurors and a preeminent codifier of law and as a penal reformer. There was in our country the creation of a flourishing movement after his death in 1836 of anti-capital punishment in the 1830's and 1840's.

In 1814, Louise and Edward purchased a large tract of land (14,500 acres) in the Pass Christian peninsula which was part of Hancock County at that time. Edward died in 1836 and Louise sold the land in 1837 to a local developer, John Henderson (1797-1857). Henderson Point is named after this developer.

The third important descendant of Robert Livingston the Elder is Robert "Bob" Livingston who is an American lobbyist and politician who served as the US Representative from Louisiana from 1977-1998. Bob has a summer home in Cedar Point and frequents the Mockingbird Café from time to time. (*Recently your author was*

able to interview this most interesting subject.)

Bob grew up in Uptown New Orleans in an American middle class family. His father left when Bob was very young, but he and his sister, Carolyn, were blessed with a strong mother who gave them a good education and a vigorous work ethic. Bob graduated from Tulane Law School in 1968 and was a member of Delta Kappa Epsilon Fraternity. He married Bonnie Robichaux (b. 1943) a native of Raceland in Lafourche Parish in 1965. Married fifty-nine years, they reared four children: Robert, Richard, David, and Susie. Sadly, Richard died after being electrocuted by a live wire while trimming a tree damaged by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

Bob was a wartime veteran in the US Navy. He practiced law and served as a prosecutor at the local, state, and federal levels. In his most readable, candid memoir, *The Windmill Chaser*, Bob relates many enjoyable anecdotes about growing up in Uptown New Orleans. The book was a valuable source of information for this author. It contains biography, politics. Louisiana and US history, and political analysis. Such figures as Jim Garrison, Leander Perez, and Huey Long are included in his chronicle.

After a successful career as a prosecutor in New Orleans, Bob was elected as the US Representative for Louisiana's 1st Congressional District encompassing roughly half of New Orleans and many of the surrounding suburbs in 1977. Bob served thirteen terms in the US House of Representatives ending this career as Chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations. One of his many achievements in that position was to balance the federal budget. He resigned in 1999.

After Bob left the Congress, he founded a lobbying company, the Livingston Group. Bob explained in his memoir the im-

portance of lobbyists to the legislative process which is educate lawmakers about the detailed and often technical pros and cons of proposed legislation. Much like a court trial where a brief is submitted to the judge by lawyers for the plaintiff and the defendant, congressmen benefit from this input. A congressman's staff does not have the resources to thoroughly vet all these various issues in bills that come before him.

The Livingston Group was particularly involved in foreign affairs so typical for a member of the Livingston Family. Bob worked on such matters as achieving Congressional Approval of the Morocco-United States Free Trade Agreement and normalization of relations between the US and Libya. The Livingston Group clients have included Egypt, Citigroup, and Verizon. Bob is still working part-time in Alexandria, VA, but loves to return as often as he can to Hancock County for rest and relaxation.

In conclusion, our country has been blessed over the last four hundred years with old, noble clans such as the Livingston Family. This long tradition of service in politics fostered good government and noble achievements such as the Declaration of Independence and the Louisiana Purchase. Edward Livingston was an indispensable aid to General Andrew Jackson helping him cobble together a robust defense before the invading British Army advanced to Chalmette, LA. Bob Livingston has served his country his whole life as a prosecutor, lawmaker, and lobbyist. In 2003 he was inducted into the Louisiana Political Museum and Hall of Fame in Winnfield. He has been invited to speak at one of our Hancock County Historical Society luncheons.

SOURCES:

Hatcher, William S. *Edward Livingston*. Binghamton N. Y.: Vail Ballou Press Inc., Copyright



The Battle of Lake Borgne

Early maps of the waters off Hancock County and early deed descriptions of the lands adjacent to these waters indicate that Lake Borgne extended eastward to the mouth of the Bay of Saint Louis.

by Louisiana St. University, 1940.

Livingston, Robert L., Jr., personal interview, April 23, 2024.

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THE BATTLE OF THE BAY OF SAINT LOUIS

By
Eddie Coleman

The War of 1812 is the last time that a foreign army invaded United States soil. British forces arrived in great force along the eastern seaboard, and because of the importance of the port of New Orle-

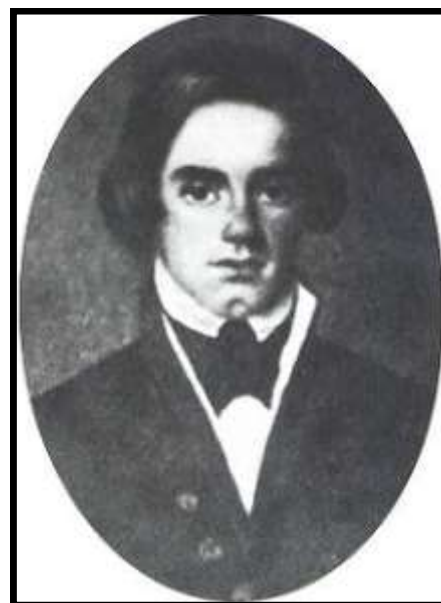
ans which controlled the Mississippi River, authorities knew it was only a matter of time until British naval forces tried to take it.

In early December 1814 U. S. Commodore Daniel T. Patterson, commanding the New Orleans station, received a letter from Pensacola that British warships were in the area. As a result, he dispatched "five gunboats, one tender, and a dispatch boat to the passes Mariana and Christiana" to observe British action in the Mississippi Sound. Commander Patterson ordered Thomas A. P. Catesby Jones to place his boats outside the Rigolets and not to remain too long anchored in one place.

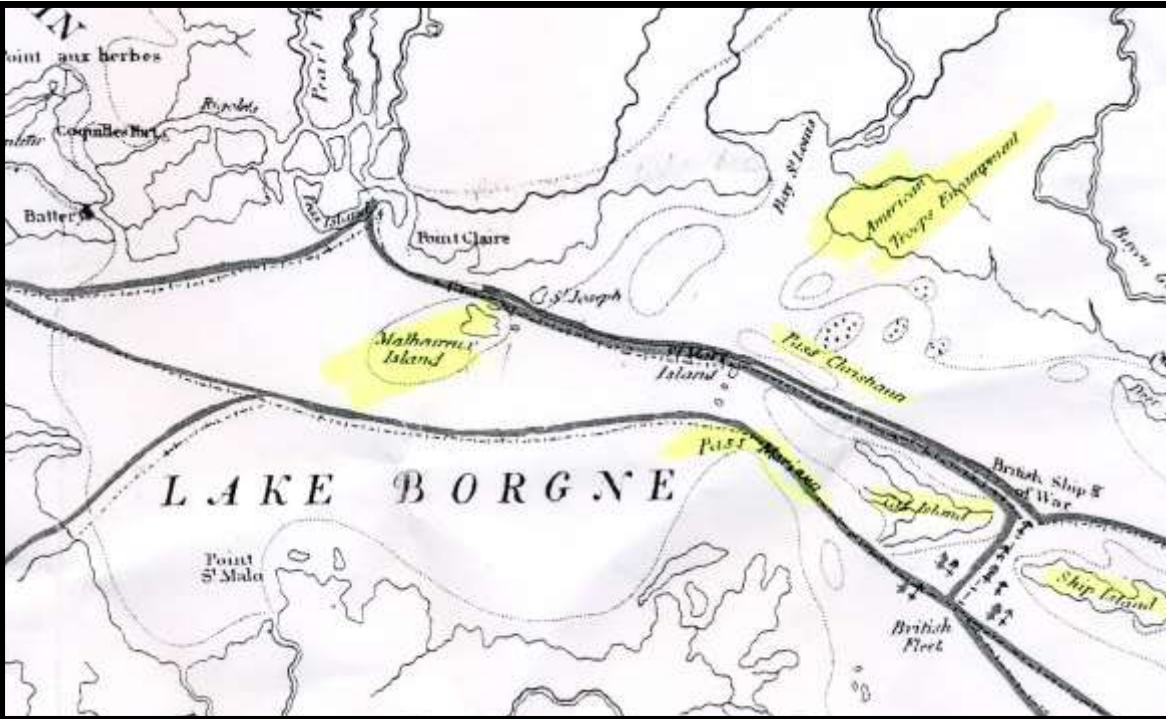
Accordingly, Lt. Jones sent two gunboats, one under command of Lt. Isaac M'Keever and one under the command of Sailing Master George Ulrick, to Dauphin Island to check on things there while he and the other gunboats patrolled the Mississippi Sound. Anchored within Dauphin Island, M'Keever and Ulrick observed a couple of British warships at sea. Deciding to follow the route of the vessels westward, the commanders of the gunboats

quite ingeniously sailed within the barrier islands of the Mississippi Sound. Such a stratagem was possible because these gunboats drew less water than the British warships and could, therefore, sail in the shallower water of the Sound. They stayed parallel to and kept an eye on the passage of the warships in the Gulf, the islands offering cover for the Americans.

As they passed Biloxi, the two US gunboats joined Lt. Jones and the other three gunboats and continued toward Lake Borgne. As the small American force moved toward the eastern tip of Cat Island, one can imagine their surprise at discovering the British fleet had increased so large as to be insurmountable by their small flotilla of gunboats. This British naval force of more than twelve hundred troops and forty-five launches and barges with forty-three cannon among them was commanded by Captain Nicholas Lockyer. The small



Lt. Thomas A.P. Catesby Jones
(Lt. Jones' name is also found spelled Thomas ap Catesby Jones. The capitalization of "A.P." comes from his signature on his official report of the Battle of Lake Borgne.)



This map (1815) is part of a larger map contained in the book *Historical Memoir of the War in West Florida and Louisiana in 1814-1815*. It's quite easy to see that at one time the eastern boundary of Lake Borgne extended at least to the mouth of the Bay of Saint Louis. One may also see the British ships anchored between Ship and Cat Islands.

American flotilla continued westward to Pass Marianne. Here they anchored and “received provisions from the Bay of St. Louis.” While here, the crew of 182 men with a total of twenty-three cannon readied their gunboats for an attack.

Fearing that military supplies stored in the village of Bay St. Louis would fall into British hands, Lt. Jones sent the U. S. schooner *Seahorse* into the bay on the afternoon of December 13 under the command of Sailing Master William Johnson. His orders were to remove or destroy these supplies. The British command initially sent three vessels to prevent the *Seahorse* from accomplishing its mission.

All of the activity on the water drew concerned and curious citizens of the village to the shores of the bay. A young John Baptiste Toulme, who was later elected mayor of BSL and who was the son of the original J. B. Toulme who had fled from Haiti because of the slave uprising there, had gathered with a group of locals on the bluff at Ulman Ave. to observe the activity. An elderly woman from

Natchez who was visiting a local health resort in the city, Mrs. Isabella Hutchins Claiborne, was quoted as saying, "Will no one fire a shot in defense of our country?" At this query the young Mr. Toulme took his cigarette and lighted a nearby cannon. The ball landed close to the approaching British fleet, whose commanders assumed there were strong American defense forces in the bay. They retaliated by returning fire. Attacked by British fire, Johnson managed to hold out for a short time with support from shore. The volley of grapeshot from the *Sea-horse* repelled the three British attack boats which withdrew momentarily only to be joined soon afterward by

four others. This force of seven British barges was enough to cause Johnson to make his ultimate decision: to set fire to his ship and provisions to prevent their being captured.

Later, in the afternoon of December 13, Lt. Jones decided to move his vessels into Lake Borgne headed toward the Rigolets and Fort Petite Coquille located on the side of Lake Pontchartrain. Unfortunately the winds were not with him and the boats, including the *USS Alligator*, were forced to ground in the channel of Malheureux Island about 1:00 A. M. on Dec. 14. The *USS Alligator* was ultimately cap-

As it turns out, Mrs. Claiborne was the sister-in-law of WCC Claiborne. A letter written by Laura Eugenie Florian, from New Orleans the day after the Battle of New Orleans, to her friend Lydia Latrobe Roosevelt in New Jersey, gives more information about their mutual friend, Mrs. Claiborne. According to Ms. Florian Mrs. Claiborne was quite frail, yet she was able to carry cartridges to soldiers fighting from the shores of the Bay of St. Louis. This account suggests that there was more military activity on the shore of the Bay than mentioned by Jones in his official report.

Wiese, Jason. *The Historic New Orleans Collection*.

tured and could not help the United States thwart the British attack.

In his official report to Commandant Daniel Todd Patterson detailing the events of the Battle of Lake Borgne, Jones described the defense mechanism he and his fellow officers devised to face such an intimidating force as the British warships. They decided to lash the boats together across the channel on the western end of Malheureux Island and make their stand there. Initially they were successful in defending their position, but unfortunately their gunboats began to drift, and the British were able to defeat the small U. S. command. The entire battle lasted about two and a half hours.

Nonetheless, there were successes by the U. S. Navy. The sailors were able to repel an advance force of the enemy, killing or wounding nearly every officer and sinking two of the three advance boats. Another four British boats tried the same maneuver, but were also repelled by the Americans. Unfortunately, Jones was severely wounded in this second skirmish and had to leave the deck, giving command to Master's-mate George Parker. Although fighting gallantly to defend his boat, Mr. Parker was severely wounded, and the British took command of his gunboat. As a result, the enemy used this gunboat to open fire upon the Americans, who quickly succumbed to the superior force of the British Navy. Ultimately, there were six Americans killed and thirty-five wounded; the British lost seventeen killed and ninety-four wounded.

At first glance the skirmish at the mouth of the Bay of St. Louis might seem to be an unimportant event in the War of 1812. Moreover, the Battle of Lake Borgne may appear to be insignificant. Ultimately the contrary has proven true. The two altercations delayed the British warships on their journey to New Orleans for the Battle of New Orleans and gave Andrew Jackson

and his forces time to arrive in and establish fortifications at the Chalmette Battlefield for the final military action in the War of 1812.

SOURCES:

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SINK OR BE SUNK!

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301 Blaize Avenue, Bay St. Louis, MS 39520

PERFORMANCES AT 2 PM AND 7 PM

Doors open one hour prior to performance.

Admission is free, but seating is limited.

To reserve your seat, scan the QR code.

Donations are greatly appreciated!



Please be advised that this performance includes flashing lights and loud noises that mimic gunfire and cannon blasts.

The Hancock County Historical Society (HCHS) will present two performances of *Sink or Be Sunk!* Performances will be held Saturday, September 28 at 2 pm and 7 pm at the Bay St. Louis Community Hall, located at 301 Blaise Avenue, Bay St. Louis, MS. Admission is free. Donations will be freely accepted.

Persons with sensory issues are advised that sound and lighting effects mimicking gunfire and cannon blasts will bring the battles to life during the show.

The Mississippi Humanities Council has awarded HCHS a \$2,500 grant in support of this production. The Society is also grateful to the City of Bay St. Louis and to the Mystic Krew of the Seahorse for their support and assistance. For further information, call HCHS at 228-467-4090. To reserve seats, visit <https://hancock39520.wixsite.com/sink-or-be-sunk>.

NEW MEMBERS

Dean Agee
Bay St. Louis

William S. Crawford
Jackson, Mississippi

NOMINATION COMMITTEE

A nomination committee will be formed this month to elect members to the Board of Directors for the society. If you wish to volunteer to be on the HCHS Board of Directors or if you wish to suggest another member to serve on the board, please get in touch with Chris Roth at 228-323-1105.

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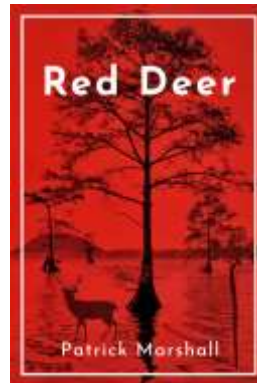
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